

CONFESSIONS OF A WIFE

AUNT MARY IS FRIGHTFULLY ILL

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"Aunt Mary," I called, as I left the telephone, "I am going out with Eliene."

There was no answer, so I stuck to the door. After listening a moment, I thought I heard her groaning and pushed the door ajar, and I saw Aunt Mary with pain-drawn face stretched on the bed.

"Why, dear Aunt, what is the matter? Why did you not call someone?"

"It's nothing, Margie, it will pass in a little while; it usually does."

"What is the matter with you—have you been in this pain long—and have you ever had it before?" I asked, thoroughly ashamed that I had not found out that Aunt Mary was ill. "Let me send for the doctor."

"I think I'll be all right in a little while. It's only a case of indigestion, I guess."

"But you must not guess about it, dear; something must be done immediately to relieve you."

Aunt Mary's pain-thinned lips tried to smile, but she was in such agony that they became only a pale, trembling line, tightly drawn across her teeth.

"I have been waiting, dear, for you to get well enough to go with me to the doctor, and have a thorough examination," she said.

"Margie Waverly," I said to myself, "see what your selfish indulgence and grief has done for one you love so much. We will get ready and go now if you are able," I said, "or perhaps it would be best to have the doctor come here."

"I don't feel quite well enough to stand it today, dear."

"But I am sure he will relieve you, Aunt Mary."

"For the time being, perhaps, but Margie I am almost certain that

something terrible is the matter with me."

"Nonsense, it's only an attack of indigestion. What did you eat for your breakfast?"

"A cup of coffee and a piece of toast."

The paroxysm of pain was leaving her, but as she lay there with only a loose gown over her night dress, I saw that she had grown very thin. There were great dark circles under her beautiful eyes, and all her wonted color had left her face. She seemed suddenly to have grown old, for the first time she looked her 65 years. All at once the thought of her dying ripped my heart. My thoughts must have written themselves on my face, for Aunt Mary looked up and said, "Yes, Margie, I think the summons has come. I am not afraid to die, but, oh, I don't want to suffer, don't let me suffer long."

"Now, dear Aunt Mary, we neither of us know anything about this. I am going to call up Dr. Atwater, and have him give you something to quiet you now, and tomorrow we will have some specialist that he will recommend make a thorough examination and diagnosis."

Neither of us, little book, put our fears into the dread word cancer, but it was uppermost in the thoughts of each, although it did not seem possible nor right that dear, dear Aunt Mary whose life had been a blessing to all that knew her should be tortured and torn and then cast into the great maw of death.

"I won't think of it," I said to myself as I went to call Dr. Atwater. He came soon, looked very grave, gave her a hyperdermic of morphine which quieted her after a little. "What do you think is the matter with her?" I asked him as we left her sleeping.

"I don't know, Margie," he evaded, "but you must have some idea."